

# ***Nature and Outdoor Institutions in Uruguay. First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

**André Dalben**

e-mail: [dalben@unifesp.br](mailto:dalben@unifesp.br)

*Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP). Brasil*

**Abstract:** Throughout the first half of the 20th century, different outdoor institutions, such as camps, open-air schools, and holiday colonies, were established in Uruguay. The research aimed to analyze the representations of nature in the discourses of these three different institutions. We used sources consulted at the *Biblioteca Especializada Dr. Luis Morquio* and the *Museo Pedagógico José Pedro Valera*. The camps began to be organized by the *Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes* in Piriápolis in 1911. The camps were generally marked by an idealization of conquering nature and overcoming its challenges. The first open-air school was opened in Montevideo in 1913. By the end of the 1930s, there were open-air schools in most Uruguayan departmental capitals. Based on eugenic and hygienist ideals, nature was idealized as a resource to strengthen health and practical education. Another outdoor institution implemented in Uruguay was the holiday colonies. The *Colonia Escolar de Vacaciones de Miramar* opened in 1945 in a maritime environment. The sea and the beach would be offered to countryside children because they constituted a human heritage of such beauty that nobody should be excluded. In this case, nature was interpreted as a human right.

**Keywords:** Holiday Colonies; Open-air Schools; Camps; Uruguay.

Received: 16-05-2022

Accepted: 02-03-2023

## **1. Introduction**

In 1937, survey results were published about existing outdoor institutions in American countries. Among the institutions are open-air schools, preventive centers, holiday colony<sup>1</sup>, camps, and others. Gathered under the name 'outdoor institutions',

---

<sup>1</sup> The use of the translation 'holiday colony', instead of 'summer camp', aims to maintain the term colony, also used in other languages to refer to these institutions (*colônia de férias*, in Portuguese; *colonia de vacaciones*, in Spanish; *colonie de vacance*, in French; *ferienkolonie*, in German) and to differentiate them from the camp tradition. According to Downs (2002, p. 21), the German term *Ferien-Kolonie* (literally 'vacations colony'), «invoked a utopian tradition of collective migration to new and unspoiled settings, movements that were illuminated by the hope that the very act to relocation would enable the migrant colony to create a new way of life for itself».

they «aimed to make children's activities of work, rest, and play can be held outdoors» (Fournié, 1937, p. 61). The inquiry presented that «within the worldwide movement in favor of institutions that, in general, can be called outdoors, the American countries stand out» (Fournié, 1937, p.61).

The medical ideal that supported outdoor institutions was quite old and emerged mainly from natural medicine (naturopathy). This medical branch proposed a return to nature to remove the ills considered inherent to the urban-industrial civilization and strengthen the human body and its organic defenses. Its precepts celebrated the use of natural elements to cure and prevent diseases. Sunlight, water, fresh air, altitude climate, and natural food composed the different treatment techniques, such as heliotherapy, hydrotherapy, and climatotherapy (Villaret, 2005; Baubérot, 2004).

The treatments created were primarily used by institutions specialized in treating and preventing tuberculosis, a disease responsible for a large number of deaths in different countries in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The development of the BCG vaccine in the 1920s did not represent immediate advancements once its large-scale use started only in the 1950s. For many decades, treatment attempts and tuberculosis control were made through natural therapies that included the systematic exposition of the body to sunlight and fresh air, as well as physical exercises in open and airy spaces. This medical ideal grounded the creation of sanatoriums and different institutions targeting children, such as holiday colonies, open-air schools, and children's preventive centers (Bertolli Filho, 2001; Armus, 2007).

Different outdoor institutions were conceived in the first half of the 20th century in Uruguay. The first initiative implemented was the camps organized by the *Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes* (ACJ), in Piriápolis, in 1911. These were international camps focused on young students from different countries. Their «program was mostly concerned with the study, analysis, and reflection on the different themes of present times, under a Christian perspective» (Artus, Chanquet, 2012, p. 26). Since 1923, camps reserved for children started to be organized in Piriápolis, Pando, Atlántida, Colonia, and Maldonado. In 1926, the *Comisión Nacional de Educación Física* (CNEF) organized a camp, especially targeting public-school children from Montevideo (Fournié, 1937, 1927a).

*Liga Uruguaya contra la Tuberculosis* (LUT) created the first open-air school in the city of Montevideo in 1913 in collaboration with *Cuerpo Médico Escolar* (CME) and the *Dirección General de Instrucción Primaria* (DGIP). In the early 1920s, the Uruguayan government fully assumed the working of this teaching establishment and inaugurated two open-air schools around Montevideo. Since the 1930s, open-air schools have expanded in the country, with an institution in almost each department capital. These institutions reached international projection, mainly due to the dissemination work enacted by the physician Américo Mola and educationalist Emilio Fournié in congresses and specialized journals (Dalben, 2019).

Holiday colonies were also organized in Uruguayan lands, being called open-air schools in some documents. On January 1929, for example, the *Colonia Marítima*, organized between the beaches of Buceo and Malvín, was also called in some documents *Escuela Marítima* (Schiaffino, 1929; Fournié, 1931, Petrillo, 1932). According to Schiaffino (1929, p. 109), «the name *Colonia Marítima* given is inappropriate, as the children do not sleep there but stay only until some hours

of the afternoon, in a regime similar to the Open-air Schools, which it is only one variety». In 1945, the *Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal* (CNEPN) opened the *Colonia Escolar de Vacaciones de Miramar*. Old installations of the grand Hotel Miramar de Carrasco were adapted for its operation. The main concern of its idealizers was students' living conditions, mainly those living in unhealthy houses and starving. The holiday colony was conceived as an institution that could benefit children's health due to the temporary contact with fresh air, the offer of abundant and varied food, walks, physical exercises, and baths. They were initiatives that relied on outdoor life, closeness to nature, and physical exercises to strengthen children's bodies (Yanuzzi, 1946).

Contact with nature was a central concern in Uruguay's three initiatives (open-air schools, holiday colonies, and camps). However, nature should not be understood as a given, ready, and finished reality. It should be seen as a historical invention that can only be interpreted from a historical perspective (Viard, 2012; Schama, 1996). Over time, different ideas of nature were consolidated. As Soares (2016, p.11) argued, «an idea of nature expresses much more an interpretative attitude of human beings in the face of nature than, in fact, the passivity of a reality». Thus, representations and singular propositions of nature were shaped, invented, and rediscovered with different senses and attributes. In this sense, the «return to nature» proposed by many outdoor institutions in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can take different motivations.

This research aimed to analyze the representations of nature in the discourses about open-air schools, holiday colonies, and camps opened in Uruguay during the first half of the 20th century. We raised the sources at the *Biblioteca Especializada Dr. Luis Morquio*, in Montevideo. Created together with the *Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia* (IIAPI), the library is responsible for the conservation of all annals of the *Congresos Panamericanos del Niño* and the editions of the bulletins published by this international body. We also consulted the archive of *Biblioteca Pedagógica Central Mtro. Sebastián Morey Otero*, in the *Museo Pedagógico José Pedro Valera*. Among the material raised, we highlight the *Anales de Instrucción Primaria*, the official journal of the *Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal do Uruguai*, and the IIAPI bulletins.

## 2. Nature as a conquest: the camps of *Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes*

The *Young Men's Christian Association* (YMCA) was founded in 1844 in England, reaching Uruguay in 1909 with the name *Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes* (ACJ). The movement of *muscular Christianity* (PUTNEY, 2001) established its bases in South America, starting from Uruguay, transforming it into the center of reception, appropriation, and construction of discourses that grounded the expansion of YMCA activities in South American countries. Montevideo was chosen as the headquarters of *Federación Sudamericana de Asociaciones Cristianas de Jóvenes* because YMCA could establish more in Uruguay than in any other South-American country, a broad influence in its official administrative structures (Dogliotti, 2012).

The coastal town of Piriápolis, 97km from Montevideo, was chosen by ACJ to buy a plot to organize its camps from 1911 onward. According to Paris (2008), the

practice of YMCA camps started around 1880 in the United States, mainly benefiting a part of the North-American middle class and offering an intense religious protestant program. These programs would become less prominent with the secularization process in the turn from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, keeping only the bucolic contact with nature as a trace of protestant tradition. According to Wall (2009), YMCA summer camps inspired British General Robert Baden-Powell to create the scout movement in the 1910s, which would broaden the repertoire of corporal practices in the camps, giving stronger military and imperialist characteristics to this contact with nature. From the military camps, they took the tents, the survival techniques, and, mainly, its philosophy of conquest. With an English tradition and competitive sports, the camps proposed a game that would be won when the most inhospitable place was reached, for example, the top of a mountain. In this sense, the English *muscular Christianity* movement contributed, in theory and practice, not only to the idealization of the sportive young figure but also to a young explorer introduced in Uruguay, mainly through the camps organized by ACJ.

According to Denis (2009) and Paris (2008), the camps constantly strained the limits of urban and nature because, as wildlife schools, they showed to civilization the possibility of living on one's own, with minimal resources, with only some tools to take over their shoulders in backpacks. Those sleeping in tents became the most civilized explorer of nature. To the participant daring young people, far from their families and close to their comrades, the explorers and adventurers were the main inspirations and would dominate their dreams and imaginations. Children's travel literature played a fundamental role in building a camp culture, inciting children's fantasies through their heroes and transforming nature into an endless adventure to be explored. The wild world was presented to city dwellers by specialized magazines portraying anthropological and natural explorations from the four corners of the world, including South America, while inciting the practice of camps, distanced their participants from the figure of the wild, as they became civilized adventurers in a nature to be conquered, beaten, and overcome by the knowledge, techniques, and tools built during human history. It is a game not only in nature but with it. Closer to children's desires and passions, the games, the building of fires, the assembling of tents, the difficulties of tracks, and the rituals around the fires cleverly assembled the imaginary of the conqueror with the ideal formation of the *Homo-imperialis*, as defined by the researcher Denis (2009).

In general, the camps proposed a battle to the body against a more offensive natural environment and against itself, its less developed capacities, and more interiorized barbarities. A control of passions, an undoubtedly civilizing process, enacted by stimulus and incentives, without joy and pleasure as the final motivations, grander and more unique but with the means to develop the refining of conducts and habits. There is an evident pedagogical process to improve the sensibilities toward nature and teach the desire to desire, to incite individuals to want to civilize and tame their impulses. Relocating imperialism as amusement, the camping practice created the necessary conditions to inscribe the ideal of a new man (more vigorous and civilized) in children's desires.

Camping was not a place for physically weak or sick children. They needed to assemble tents, and collect sticks, among other activities that demanded energy.

Hence, camping showed that the «true richness» is to have a health, well-trained, and civilized body, quickly attracting the attention of hygienist and eugenicist discourses circulating among part of the Uruguayan intellectual elite in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The camps were established in Uruguay as a technique of alternative corporal education able to escape school hegemony. From the security of natural urban parks and squares, the young people would go to a supposedly unpredictable nature to be explored and conquered. Practices to dominate this world became household pedagogies to forming Uruguayan youth outside the school environment, their bodies, habits, desires, passions, and sensibilities.

Piriápolis hosted countless international camps during the 1910s and 1920s, receiving members of local associations from different countries. The educationalist Emilio Fournié<sup>2</sup> (1927a) was aware of the ACJ camps and their educational procedures. He reported in the *Anales de Instrucción Primaria* the school camps organized by the *Comisión Nacional de Educación Física* (CNEF) in ACJ headquarter in 1926. The camps lasted 20 days, with 50 boys selected «from eleven to twelve years old, around the Years 5 and 6 [...] who were healthy, preferably from a modest social condition, to whom such a visit would be more useful (Fournié, 1927a, p. 8). The installations provided by ACJ for the camps had a large central building and twenty-seven tents with electricity, grouped into four sectors, four bathrooms, washing rooms, and hygiene services.

**Figure 1: Piriápolis Camp – tents' details and the insides (Fournié, 1927a, p. 9)**



<sup>2</sup> Fournié was a Technical Inspector at *Consejo de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal* and Chief of IIAPI. He was also part of the commission of *Cuerpo Médico Escolar* in charge of writing the regulation of the three open-air schools opened in Montevideo, and the commission responsible for the creation of *Código del Niño* in 1934.



**Figure 2: Piriápolis Camp – going for a swim. (Fournié, 1927a, p. 17).**



**Figure 3: Piriápolis camp – sharing letters. (Fournié, 1927a, p. 21).**



Camping daily routine was composed of breakfast, lunch, afternoon snacks, and dinner, tent inspection, primary instruction, exercises, and games at the beach, sea baths, trips, and night fires in the main building. According to Fournié (1927a), it was a school camp, and primary education was offered through practical contact with nature. Among the educational activities, children described the names of the

mountains they could see, checked the location of Piriápolis on the map, observed and collected rocks, plants, and insects, and analyzed the effects of rain in the formation of streams and rivers. A moment was reserved for children to write to their families. According to Fournié (1927a), children commonly narrated their discoveries, describing some of the pleasures experienced in nature and the most enjoyable activities. To the parents in Montevideo, the written reports could seem like a mirage seen by children's eyes and stimulated by the teacher's indications. If the traditional school separated children from their families' working-class culture by promoting new knowledge and abilities, the camps could surpass this opposition. Children wrote but addressed their families. While traditional schools forced students to leave behind their turbulences to be quiet at their desks, the school camp removed them from the tumult of cities to a world of movement, discoveries, and adventures (Rauch, 1988).

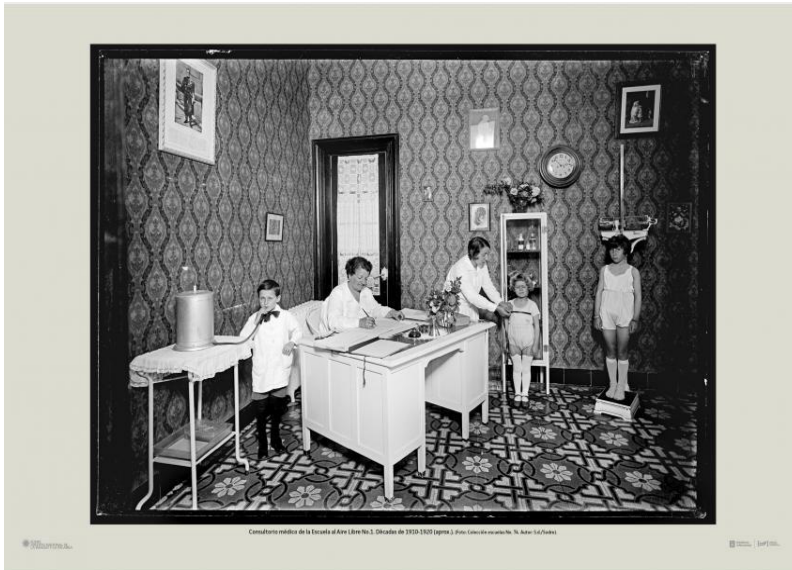
Fournié (1927a) enthusiastically described the new pedagogical opportunities offered by camping. Outdoor education was one of his main professional concerns. He believed common schools could have a similar organization to the teaching in the camps. The camps organized by CNEF at the ACJ headquarter started to take place every year (Branda, 2017). Together with open-air schools and holiday colonies, they integrate a system of outdoor initiatives for Uruguayan children.

### **3. Nature as a source of health and education: Uruguayan open-air schools**

Open-air schools opened in Uruguay in 1913 and were broadly disseminated by Américo Mola, a physician, member of the *Cuerpo Médico Escolar* (CME), and one of the central authorities on the theme of open-air schools in Uruguay. In 1928, he lectured at the International Congress of Child Protection, held in Paris, about the three open-air schools in Montevideo at the time. He was elected the president of the International Committee of Open-Air Schools and presided on the third edition of the International Congress of Open-air Schools, held in Germany in 1936. He participated in several European events, such as the second edition of the International Open-Air School Congress in Brussels and the International Conference of Holiday Colonies and Outdoor Institutions in Geneva. He built his whole career on the theme of open-air schools (Dalben, 2019).

Mola's discourse on open-air schools had strong hygienist content. He considered that the agglomeration of children and the lack of natural light and fresh air could be fought, mainly in schools. He proposed that students stay in schools that guaranteed abundant sunshine, fresh air, and physical exercises to avoid diseases and strengthen children's bodies. The arguments also presented a eugenicist content because he believed that bad habits and diseases could be transmitted from generation to generation, leading to the «degeneracy of the race». Mola also criticized the school programs as being responsible for aggravating the organic weakness of children, as they were considered extensive and tiring. He relied on nature and natural elements to restore students' physical forces. Thus, he believed that open-air schools should be reserved for physically weak and unhealthy children because they would be more prone to developing diseases like tuberculosis (Mola, 1927).

**Figure 4: «Medical office in the Open-air school no. 1. Montevideo. The 1910s-1920s (approx.)» (Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo, 2017)**



We should reflect on the concept of a weak child (*niño débil*, in Spanish), which is not limited to malnutrition but which can lay in utilitarian and medical conceptions of childhood, following the dichotomy of «normal and pathological» studied by Canguilhem (2009) and Foucault (2001). The concept of weak child can be interpreted as a way to categorize children's bodies from their school performance. It connected school performance with children's psychological and biological aspects, giving much importance to parental inheritance and the context influence. According to Martinis (2013), «This discourse will deepen the naturalization of school failure of the children from low-income groups and well ease the emergence of a series of specific institutions and practices to influence the situation» (Martinis, 2013, p. 75). Among the emerging institutions is CME, which was, according to Espiga (2015), the action center of physicians in the school context, in which children's bodies were the object of intense health control. CME was responsible for writing the regulation of the three open-air schools in Montevideo because these educational establishments were connected to hygienist and eugenicist policies that aimed to form a «moral, and genetically healthy society» through the control of children's bodies. In this sense, Depaepe and Simon (2003, p.90) alert that the initiatives of open-air schools were related to a broader movement of normalization and medicalization of society, in which «medical doctors, who already had a strong local and national presence in the political, social and cultural spheres, used school hygiene as a Trojan horse to take over schooling».

Mola's eugenicist thought became even more explicit in 1936 when he presided over the International Congress of Open-Air Schools in Germany. When reporting the event, Mola showed great enthusiasm for the Nazis' organizations of outdoor education (such as the Hitler Youth– *Hitlerjugend* – and the Land Year – *Landjahr*).



In his words: «Nowadays, Germany is not satisfied with reorganizing the State, it intends to transform ‘the German man, to live in a new society, a new man, following its ideal» (Mola, 1936, p.405). His text aimed to highlight the place given to physical education and sports in German education, praising the bodies of the «new German man», considered beautiful, vigorous, and disciplined. When reading Mola, we can affirm that contact with natural elements could not only strengthen children’s organic defenses but also allow the shaping of a healthier and more obedient society.

**Figure 5: «Open-air school no. 1. Montevideo. The 1910s-1920s (approx.)» (Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo, 2017)**



Unlike Mola, who approached open-air schools from a medical perspective, Fournié (1927b) was closer to the movements of pedagogical renovation of the New Education Movement. We should highlight that the open-air schools in Montevideo were temporary institutions. Attending children were selected by school doctors in regular schools and transferred to open-air schools at any moment of the school year. After being discharged, children resumed their classes in their original schools. Another characteristic was the reduced class time, as they were intercalated by heliotherapy sessions, gymnastics, rest, and other activities of their daily schedule. These particularities imposed some pedagogical challenges, such as the difficulty of continuing their school content, the school gap that decreased class time could cause, and questions on the teaching methodology used.

In Fournié’s (1927b) proposal, students had to do a leveling written exam to evaluate their knowledge of basic contents when joining the open-air school. Children’s permanence in the institution could vary depending on the medical discharge. Therefore, the contents of open-air schools needed to be the same as in regular ones because the students could continue their studies in their original schools. Another proposal to compensate for the reduction of class time was that

the main subjects, such as Mathematics, Language, Hygiene and Morals, and Natural, should adopt concrete, active, and practical teaching, taking advantage of the natural resources of the open-air schools. Hence, nature became an object of scientific investigation and pedagogical resource.

Fournié (1927a) distinguished formal education from the occasional or not formal. Previously planned activities would establish the first one. The second would take advantage of any event or students' conversations during the school day to teach language, morals, or science. In this proposal, teachers needed to participate in all school activities, including lunch and recess, because there might be situations that kindled the interest for themes to be explored. Fournié believed that «if the special condition of a school for the weak is contrary to intensive studies, in exchange, the conditions in which the work takes place are so favorable that they compensate the lack of time» (Fournié, 1927b, p.255).

The changes in the teaching methodologies proposed are mainly justified because open-air schools were located in broad and wooded areas. Their environment could be greatly prone to teach through practical examples and the existing natural resources used to teach school content. Thus, nature would be central to the pedagogical processes of open-air schools, with teaching supported by the senses and experiences lived daily by the students.

Fournié's considerations (1927b) about classes in open-air schools are based on texts presented in the I International Congress of Open-Air Schools and *Revue Internationale d'Éducation Nouvelle*. According to Ruchat (2003) and Savoye (2003), the international movement of open-air schools established deep relations with the proposals of pedagogical renovation from the New Education Movement. Since the 1920s, open-air schools started to be internationally disseminated as an innovation that could substitute and renew the traditional school models. Their advocates adopted renovating discourses proposing pluridisciplinary approaches, active teaching methods, and the approximation of teachers and students. Fournié was immersed in this theoretical universe when proposing the teaching methodology to be used in the open-air schools of Montevideo.

Certainly, the intended pedagogical renovation reached some open-air schools worldwide, using the practical and scientific teaching of the natural environment (Martinez, 2000; Theodorou, Karakatsani, 2007; Duval, 2009; D'Ascenzo, 2018). However, we must be careful with generalizations, as there was often a significant difference between the discourse and the everyday practice, and the pedagogical work of many open-air schools could be similar to regular schools. As analyzed by Depaepe and Simon (2003, p. 88), «emphasizing the novelty of one's own practice seemed a good strategy for attracting attention and respect in the contemporary debate on education and teaching». However, «[...] the opposition between what is absolutely 'new' and what is 'old' is ultimately no more than dream and illusion» (Depaepe, Simon, 2003, p.94-95)

Fournié's ideas seemed exactly in the domain of dreams and vision. He intended that open-air schools could take more air to children's lungs and, simultaneously, air school programs and schedules. As an enthusiast on the theme, he wished that in the future open-air schools could be attended not only by weak children but all children. This utopia was never materialized, but Uruguay was one of the few

American countries to establish a national public system of open-air schools, with educational institutions in the capital of almost all departments since 1935 (Dalben, 2019).

#### 4. Nature as a children's right: the *Colonia Escolar de Vacaciones de Miramar*

Outdoor institutions were implemented in Uruguay based on two main historical matrices: an Anglo-Saxon one from the YMCA, its sports, games, and camps, and another from the international movement of open-air schools. However, we must remember the different holiday colonies created in the country. One of the initiatives documented was the *Colonia Escolar de Vacaciones de Miramar* (CEVM), inaugurated by the *Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal* in 1945.

To achieve it, different State administration structures got together. The *Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Primaria y Normal* signed the project and provided part of the teaching staff to act in the holiday colonies. The *Comisión de Educación Física* was responsible for the professionals selected to teach gymnastic classes and games at the beach and close squares. The inspecting physicians of the *Comedores Escolares* prepared the menus of the meals to be served. The *Servicio de Sanidad Escolar* made clinical and radiological exams, took anthropometric measurements, and created health files. The school visitors selected the children mainly from the new open-air schools working in the countryside, in Artigas, Rivera, Cerro Largo, and Durazno. The dental clinic established in the holiday colony did all dental health care. Montevideo Police and the Maritime Police helped in the organization, mainly of sea baths and train rides. Administrative bodies of Montevideo were in charge of arranging the luxurious *Hotel Miramar de Carrasco*, built for tourism but closed at the time, to accommodate everyone, the train tickets for children leaving the countryside to Montevideo, and the buses for internal transport. Several day trips occurred in *Jardín Zoológico*, *Parque Rodó*, *Palacio Legislativo*, *Teatro de Verano de Malvin*, *Escuela Marítima*, customs, *Escuela de Aviación Militar*, *Rambla Sur*, and *Estadio Centenario*. Last but not least, we stress the highlight given to the arts in this initiative. Holiday colony managers selected musicians, poets, and other artists to perform for the children.

Sometimes called school camp (*campamento escolar*), others as school holiday colony (*colonia escolar de vacaciones*), or even school vacation camp (*campamento escolar de vacaciones*), showing the confluence of several outdoor initiatives in Uruguayan history in previous decades, the institution opened in 1945, after the nefarious extents of German eugenicist policy were known worldwide. At that moment, the tone of the favorable discourses for its creation and the establishment of a permanent public policy were connected with the concept that the State should provide children with ways to guarantee their innate rights. According to the director of the vacation camp: «We understand that every child has the right to enjoy the benefits of nature as it is a powerful factor for his physical, mental, and moral well-being» (Yannuzzi, 1946, p.213). The works on children's protection, which included holiday colonies, were classified as «love, dedication, constant concern, and the true meaning of responsibility» (Yannuzzi, 1946, p.229). One of the main people

conceptualizing this initiative affirmed that «With this Holiday Colony, we settle a great social debt with children, our negligence, our ignorance, and our selfishness» (Yannuzzi, 1946, p.226). In these terms, CEVM frees itself, more than ever, from eugenicist desires, often rooted in the history of outdoor institutions.

Among their practices, medical exams were done when selecting children and on their return trips. However, though many, they could not stop an outbreak of diphtheria in the collective accommodation, which caused great concern to the director (Yannuzzi, 1946). The following year, when organizing two holiday colonies, one on Malvin beach and another in Piriápolis, the medical exams intensified not to risk children's health again (Yannuzzi, 1947). There was still an interest in improving the physical defenses of poorer children; however, this was not limited to the hygiene issue, as different physical exercises were carried out in these institutions. Sunbathing and sea bathing, rest, and activities were held mainly in the morning, opening space for outings and day trips during the summer afternoons. Nighttime was reserved for sessions of educational movies, music, readings, games, chants, and parties, among other calmer educational activities, with few completely free moments.

The folklore was part of the activities, with the teaching of *crioula* and Indigenous dances (Yannuzzi, 1946). Hence, the past would be interpreted as national folklore. If some activities were reserved only for boys and others for girls, there were some in which «children from all ages and sexes can participate to foment the sympathy, cordiality, and sociability among the different groups» (Yannuzzi, 1947, p.63). If different groups of children were organized, each «received names of birds to suggest their joy, beauty, restlessness, work perseverance, and respect to their peers» (Yannuzzi, 1947, p.70).

When receiving countryside children into open-air schools and consolidating a highly hermetic and complete system, the holiday colonies started to have an almost national character, representing an innovation because, until then, most holiday colonies were exclusively reserved for children from large cities. This inverse movement could be connected to the intentions, already expressed decades before in the manuals of urban life and good manners, of replacing rural habits with so-called civilized conduct (Ruggiano, 2016) and the slow process of complete democratization of holiday colonies that started to open up for all students, since the 1960s.

Created in a maritime environment, the Uruguayan seashore was offered in these vacation trips for countryside children, not merely as a «patriotic duty» or hygienist, but mainly because the beach was a human heritage of such beauty that nobody should be excluded from it. As Constante Turturiello, a figure connected to Uruguayan sports and leading articulator for the creation of these first vacation colonies in Uruguay, knew:

Children from the north of the country that arrive to the fraternal harmony of our flocks, we wish to offer you this sea that is yours and this sky claiming justice to all children who will come, enjoy what does not belong to the heritage of men but to the sacred code of childhood. (Yannuzzi, 1946, p.228-229)



The arrival of children from the countryside always provoked more commotion among the teachers and managers of the holiday colony than those from Montevideo, a city near the mouth of the River Plate. The professionals did not forget those:

little faces amazed with the magnificent spectacle of our coast, who anxiously scrutinized all that was offered in front of their eyes; their happy exclamations and comments on their arrival, the joy shown when meeting so many friends (Yannuzzi, 1946, p.231).

In the holiday colonies, the children could enjoy the show of the sea joining itself with the sky for the first time, and relish in delight by the water and the waves on their bodies. On the sea, the body pleasantly rejoiced because the few clothes allowed the movements. Boys and girls joined the teachers not by fear and respect but by affection and sentimental attachment. «The silent hours might be surprised by the happy meeting of these children, their laughter, and cries of joy merging with the endless colors of birds» (Yannuzzi, 1946, p.231). Holiday colonies established a seasonal rhythm of joy, laughter, and games. The laughter, the supreme manifestation of the body that wants a party, could not be silenced. On the contrary, the triad Food, Rest, and Hygiene was joined by Joy. The photos were a resource to reinforce the emotional action the holiday colony could promote in the participant children, especially the sea baths.

**Figure 6:** «...bathing, was one of the happiest moments in the camp» (Yannuzzi, 1946, p. 290).



**Figure 7:** «after a delicious bath, the happy group returns to the hotel» (Yannuzzi, 1946, p. 288).



We should note that:

the camps can be conducive to some initial ideas on how educational experiences connecting childhood and nature can be seen as «emotional triggers», that is, how they involve the emergence of affection allusions, primordial reactions that, before crystalizing itself into an ideological justification or a pedagogical postulate, reveal fundamental guidelines of certain actors regarding all or part of the elements of lived experience (Toro-Blanco, 2021).

Indeed, the CEVM reports corresponded with the director's and workers' points of view that participated in the organization. Children's experience was narrated from the adults' perspective in written documents or photos. Unfortunately, we do not have documents to analyze how the emotional triggers, mainly caused by seeing the ocean for the first time, reverberated in children. Again, there could be a significant abyss between discourse and practice. However, it is significant that CEVM has been defended, among other arguments, from the premise that nature and its beauties would be a human heritage that should be offered to children, i.e., a child's right.

## 5. Final remarks

The initiatives of camps, outdoor schools, and holiday colonies put into place in Uruguay during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were grounded in different representations of nature. Certainly, these representations found in the research sources should not be considered stuck, having confluences in the same discourse,

depending on the historical subject. Nevertheless, it was possible to delineate some of the central representations of nature in the discourses of each initiative analyzed.

The typical universe of imperialism, and the anthropological exhibitions, fed the discourses of many YMCA camps worldwide. In this sense, nature was frequently represented as a challenge to be explored, won, and conquered, and those who camped were the ideal of *Homo-imperialis*. Such representations may have been present in international camps organized by ACJ since 1911 in Piriápolis. The research mainly analyzed the initiative of a school camp organized by CNEF at the headquarter of ACJ in 1926. According to educationalist Fournié, nature was considered a pedagogical resource, i.e., a source of observation and scientific study on children's instruction. Specific moments in the daily routine of camps were conceived to promote the teaching of school content through contact with nature. Nature's elements, such as water, air, mountains, plants, and animals, were study sources.

Nature was also represented as a source of cure and prevention, mainly the outdoor school opened in Uruguay in 1913. Natural elements, such as clean air and sunlight, associated with physical exercises would provide the resources considered important for the body strengthening of weak children. In the outdoor schools discussed by the physician Mola, the precepts of natural medicine were intertwined with the hygienist and eugenic thought, analyzed as measures to conform to an allegedly healthy and docile society. Thus, we can affirm that Mola was part of the medical movements that advocated for the normalization of childhood. In Fournié's discourses, open-air schools were thought from the assumptions of the New Education movement and the natural resources in the school used to teach school content. Therefore, nature would be central to the pedagogical processes of outdoor schools and an indispensable resource for conceiving and discussing new teaching methodologies.

Another representation of nature was to consider it a human right of which children were deprived, mainly when referring to the sea and its marine environment. This way, the discourses about the *Colonia Escolar de Vacaciones de Miramar* went beyond the representation of nature as a source to strengthen the body and the organic defenses. They included a poetic of emotions, and the trip was vital to children's souls and psyche, especially regarding the first contact of countryside children with the sea. The adults responsible for CEVM always highlighted children's joy, and their work was socially justified by the pleasant experiences lived by children during their vacation trips.

## 6. References

- Armus, D. (2007). *La ciudad impura*. Salud, tuberculosis y cultura en Buenos Aires, 1870-1950. Buenos Aires: EDHASA.
- Artus, A. G. & Chanquet, A. P. (2012). *Campamento & educación*. Montevideú: IUACJ.

- Baubérot, A. (2004). *Histoire du naturisme: le mythe du retour à la nature*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Bertolli Filho, C. (2001). *História social da tuberculose e do tuberculoso: 1900-1950*. Rio de Janeiro: FIOCRUZ.
- Branda, M. C. (2017). *O corpo em jogo: emergência do discurso sobre o jogo no campo da educação física no começo do século XX no Uruguai*. (Master 's Thesis) Centro de Ciências da Educação da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis.
- Canguilhem, G. (2009). *O normal e o patológico*. São Paulo: Forense Universitária, 2009.
- Centro de Fotografía de Montevideo. (2017). *Fotogalería: Parque Rodó*. Disponível em: <<https://cdf.montevideo.gub.uy/fotosexposicion/21014>>
- D'Ascenzo, M. (2018). *Per una storia delle scuole all'aperto in Italia*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS.
- Dalben, A. (2019). Las escuelas al aire libre uruguayas: creación y circulación de saberes. *Educación Física y Ciencia*, 21 (2), pp. e075.
- Denis, D. (2009). Naissance d'un «homo imperialis» britannique: la transposition ludique du thème de la conquête dans l'éducation au plein-air. In Sisrot, O. *La vie au grand air: aventure du corps et évasions vers la nature*. Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy.
- Depaepe, M. & Simon, F. (2003). Les écoles de plein air en Belgique. In Châtelet, A.-M.; Lerch, D. & Luc, J.-N. *L'école de plein air: une expérience pédagogique et architecturale dans l'Europe du XXè siècle*. Paris: Recherches.
- Dogliotti, P. (2012). *Cuerpo y currículum: discursividades en torno a la formación de docentes de educación física en Uruguay (1874-1948)*. (Master 's Thesis) Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación de la Universidad de la República, Montevideo.
- Downs, L. L. (2002). *Childhood in the promised land: working-class movements and the colonies de vacances in France, 1880-1960*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Duval, N. (2009). *L'École des Roches*. Paris: Belin
- Espiga, S. (2015). *La infancia normalizada: libros, maestros e higienistas en la escuela pública uruguaya 1885-1918*. Montevideu: Antiteses
- Foucault, M. (2001). *Os anormais*. São Paulo: WMF Martins Fontes, 2001.
- Fournié, E. (1927a). El campamento escolar de Piriápolis. *Anales de Instrucción Primaria*. 21 (1), pp. 1-37.



- Fournié, E. (1927b). Las escuelas al aire libre, desde el punto de vista pedagógico. *Boletín del Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia*. 1 (2), pp. 252-263.
- Fournié, E. (1931). Organización de la enseñanza primaria y normal en el Uruguay. *Boletín del Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia*. 1 (4), p.484-495, 1931.
- Fournié, E. (1937). Escuelas y obras al aire libre en América. *Boletín del Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia*. 10 (4), pp. 580-610.
- Martinez, J. M. B. (2000). De las escuelas al aire libre a las aulas de la naturaleza. *AREAS: Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales*. 20, pp. 171-182.
- Martinis, P. (2013). *Educación, pobreza y seguridad en el Uruguay de la década de los noventa*. Montevideo: Departamento de Publicaciones de la Universidad de la República.
- Mola, A. (1927). Escuelas al aire libre de Montevideo. *Boletín del Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia*. 1 (2), pp. 199- 220.
- Mola, A. (1936). Tercer Congreso Internacional de Escuelas al Aire Libre. *Boletín del Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia*. 10 (1), pp. 402-412.
- Paris, L. (2008). *Children's nature: the rise of the American summer camp*. Nova lorque: New York University.
- Petrillo, L. M. (1932) Tratamiento general de la tuberculose pulmonar infantil. *Boletín del Instituto Internacional Americano de Protección a la Infancia*. 6 (1), p.63-81.
- Putney, C. (2001). *Muscular christianity: manhood and sports in protestant America (1880-1920)*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Rauch, A. (1988). *Vacances et pratiques corporelles*. Paris: PUF.
- Ruchat, M. (2003). Jean Dupertuis (1886-1951). In Châtelet, A.-M.; Lerch, D. & Luc, J.-N. *L'école de plein air: une expérience pédagogique et architecturale dans l'Europe du XXè siècle*. Paris: Recherches.
- Ruggiano, G. (2016). *Ser un cuerpo educado: urbanidades en el Uruguay (1875-1918)*. 2016. (PHd Thesis) Faculdade de Educação da Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas.
- Savoye, A. (2003). Écoles de plein air et éducation nouvelle en France (1920-1950). In Châtelet, A.-M.; Lerch, D. & Luc, J.-N. *L'école de plein air: une expérience pédagogique et architecturale dans l'Europe du XXè siècle*. Paris: Recherches.
- Schama, S. (1996). *Paisagem e memória*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

- Soares, C. L. (2016). Três notas sobre natureza, educação do corpo e ordem urbana. In Soares, C. L. *Uma educação pela natureza: a vida ao ar livre, o corpo e a ordem urbana*. Campinas: Autores Associados.
- Theodorou, V. & Karakatsani, D. (2007). École de plein air et éducation nouvelle et limites d'une tentative au début du XXe siècle en Grèce : influences. *Carrefours de l'Éducation*. 23 (1), pp. 187-203.
- Toro-Blanco, P. (2021). Las colonias escolares: apropiación, afecto y conflicto en la educación chilena a inicios del siglo XX. In Galak, E.; Abramowski, A.; Assaneo, A. & Frechtel, I. *Circulaciones, tránsitos y traducciones en la historia de la educación*. Buenos Aires, UNIPE.
- Viard. J. (1990). *Penser la nature: tiers espace entre ville et campagne*. La Tour des Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube.
- Villaret, S. (2005). *Histoire du naturisme en France depuis le siècle des lumières*. Paris: Vuibert.
- Wall, S. (2009). *Nurture of nature: the childhood, antimodernism, and Ontario summer camps (1920-1955)*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Yanuzzi, E. S. (1946). Colonia escolar de vacaciones de Miramar. *Anales de Instrucción Primaria*. 9 (3,4), pp. 212-328.
- Yanuzzi, E. S. (1947). Colonia de vacaciones. *Boletín del Instituto de Protección a la Infancia*. 21 (1), pp. 51-73.